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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000461

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR - A/S FRIED FROM AMBASSADOR MILOVANOVIC

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: RESOLVING THE NAME ISSUE -- BACK TO
BASICS

REF: ATHENS 1009

Classified By: AMB MILOVANOVIC, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) In order to maximize chances for resolving the name
issue by the December NATO NAC, we recommend the following:

--getting UN mediator Nimetz to refocus talks on the core
issues of a name formulation and scope of use;

--dealing with "peripheral" issues after the name issue has
been resolved, perhaps in a UNSCR, and as part of a package
of confidence-building measures based on resolution of the
name issue;

--leveling an asymmetrical playing field by letting Athens
know that, while it clearly is negotiating from a position of
strength in the post-Bucharest environment, it cannot dictate
the terms of a name solution and expect that Skopje will
accept those terms, even at the risk of the GOM losing its
NATO membership prospect this year;

--in the absence of an action-forcing event such as the
Bucharest Summit, committing to high-level USG engagement to
push and support an effort, complementary to the Nimetz
process, to close an Athens-Skopje deal by the December NAC;
and

--encourage direct talks between PM Gruevski and PM
Karamanlis, preferably in a third country and possibly
starting on the margins of the UNGA, to establish some
personal rapport and give each leader a better sense of his
counterpart's interests in a solution.

PERIPHERAL MATTERS OBSCURE CORE ISSUES

12. (C) PM Gruevski's letter to the Greek PM asking for
resolution of Macedonian minority rights and restitution
issues in Aegean Greece, and the Greek reaction to it
(reftel), reflect the extent to which progress on the name
issue has gotten bogged down in peripheral issues. Gruevski
believes the latest raft of ideas from UN name mediator
Nimetz contains peripheral issues favorable to Greece (e.g.,
exclusive Greek claims to ancient Macedonian heritage). He
has now responded in kind by throwing the Aegean issue into
the mix (and upped the ante by doing so publicly). We
believe the two sides, led by Nimetz with strong USG backing,
need to get back to basics and to refocus discussions on
resolving the name issue within the framework of the 1995

Interim Accord (IA).

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

13. (U) Under the 1995 IA, and UNSCRS 817 and 845 (1993) preceding it, both sides committed to negotiations under UN auspices with a view to reaching agreement on the name of the state. Such issues as commercial use of the name, use of toponyms, cultural heritage, or adjectival description of the Macedonian nationality and language were not mentioned in either the UN resolutions or the IA.

14. (U) We believe the USG should encourage Nimetz to put first things first and return to the core issue of finding a mutually acceptable formulation for the name, and of determining the scope of use for it. Issues such as minority rights, claims to ancient heritage, or descriptions of nationality/language should be left for later discussions, historical commissions, UNSCRs, etc., once resolution of the name and scope of use have boosted confidence between the two sides.

LEVELING AN ASYMMETRICAL PLAYING FIELD

15. (C) The GOM assesses that Greece, having vetoed Macedonia's NATO membership invitation at Bucharest, now believes its position of overwhelming strength removes any need to negotiate, and that Athens believes there are no limits to the demands it can impose and goal posts it can

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move in order to dictate the terms of a name agreement. Nimetz's recent floating of ideas, heavily weighted toward Greek positions, feeds that GOM perception. So does the recent statement by NATO Secretary General Scheffer to the effect that the GOM has to recognize that Macedonia is the one asking for membership in NATO, and not the other way around. While such arguments may be objectively true, they only reinforce PM Gruevski's view that no reasonable compromise is achievable with Greece at this time.

16. (C) Thus, Gruevski's approach has toughened, as reflected in the letter he sent to PM Karamanlis on Macedonian minority and restitution issues in Aegean Greece. Currently enjoying an unprecedented 66% approval rating in the polls, and with an 82-seat super majority in Parliament, Gruevski is confident he has the public's support for a tough negotiating stance. Greece's attempt to wield the EU stick to force a solution is also likely to fail. Gruevski can live with the status quo vis-a-vis Macedonia's EU membership bid, since the country's current "EU candidate country" status gives Macedonia access to EU development funds, advisers, and negotiations on a visa liberalization regime. What is clearly very bad for Macedonia is not -- at least in the short term -- bad for Gruevski politically.

17. (C) Despite all of the above, we believe it is possible to persuade Gruevski, and the Macedonians more broadly, to make a deal on the name that paves the way for NATO and EU membership and better bilateral relations with Greece. A key element to re-establishing positive momentum, and refraining from provocative moves such as the open letter regarding ethnic Macedonians in Greece, will be convincing Gruevski and company that we have a way of getting the Greek side to a more reasonable position. The Macedonians perceive the Greeks as continuously raising the price tag on an agreement, with no one else having the ability or willingness to constrain them. Under these circumstances, giving in on anything just seems to the Macedonians to invite further demands. We need to be clear with Athens that it cannot simply dictate the terms of a solution. If the Greeks are going to get to pick the name (by limiting the field of acceptable options), they are not going to convince the Macedonians to accept a comprehensive scope of use up to and

including changing the Constitution. A much broader scope is possible with a more modest name change (e.g., Republika Makedoniya).

MOVING FORWARD: HIGH-LEVEL USG ENGAGEMENT....

18. (C) In the absence of an action-forcing event on the horizon comparable to the Bucharest Summit, we believe the process will require sustained, regular high-level USG engagement -- perhaps at the level of the Secretary or NSA -- to complement the Nimetz talks and speed progress toward a solution before the December NAC. The September UNGA would provide an ideal venue for kick-starting the process, with the Secretary or NSA Hadley meeting with both Prime Ministers to push for a solution by December. The parties also should be invited, again at the highest level, to Washington to hear USG views, including a tough message to Gruevski that makes it clear that his last, best chance for resolving this issue is going to be under the current US Administration, regardless of who is elected in November. We believe that approach will be more effective than U.S. shuttle diplomacy between Athens and Skopje, which could focus excessive local media attention on the process and unduly raise local public expectations for a breakthrough.

...AND DIRECT DIALOGUE

19. (C) Media caricatures of the GOG and GOM in both capitals appear to contribute substantially to each side misreading or misunderstanding the positions, intentions and actions of the other. We believe it would be useful for the two key decision-makers in this process -- PM Gruevski and PM Karamanlis -- to meet one-on-one for direct talks to at least attempt to improve each leader's understanding of his counterpart's positions and equities in the issue. Although the attempt could backfire, continued talks only at the negotiator level (Vassilakis and Dimitrov/Protoger) are unlikely to get us to a solution by December.
Milovanovic